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Prologue

A gentle wind rustled the blades of grass in the field that surrounded the cats. The pair sat still on the top of a small rise, staring out at the open territory beneath their paws, the territory that they would have to make into a home.

Tiny stars twinkled up above, and the pale brown tabby stared up at them. Her warrior ancestors were up there somewhere. Were they looking down on her with pride, or scoffing at her foolishness? She shoved her worries aside. She was there in the field, with her mate, and she was ready for the rest of her life, whatever it would bring.

"Do you want to stop here?" The black cat asked his companion.

"If you want," the pale brown tabby meowed. She curled up in the grass and wrapped her tail around her nose.

The tom stretched out at his mate's side. "Leafpool?"

"Yes?"

"I'd guess you are questioning our decision?"

"Actually no, not really. StarClan told me I could choose my own path, and I have. I'll miss my friends and family, and I'll miss being a medicine cat, but this is where my heart leads me. It leads me to you."

"You chose us?"

"Yes, Crowfeather. I chose us."

Chapter 1

The warm sun beat down on Leafpool's face as she opened her eyes. She stood up and stretched. The air was warm and pleasant. Leafpool looked up at the sky. It was sunhigh already!

"Oh no! I overslept!" Leafpool muttered to herself.

"And that's fine," Crowfeather purred.

Leafpool glanced to the side. There was Crowfeather, sitting a little ways off, with a plump rabbit at his paws.

"I've been waiting for you to wake up. It's about time," Crowfeather meowed.

"You should have woken me!" Leafpool's tail-tip twitched with annoyance.

"We aren't in a clan anymore. Who cares how long we slept, or how often our borders are marked? Welcome to the real world. All that matters to me now is you."

"Do you even care about your clan?"

"Why should I? They never cared about me."

"If they didn't care, you would be dead."

"Why are we fighting?" Crowfeather asked.

"I guess that's not smart," Leafpool agreed.

"Anyway, do you want the rabbit or not?"

"Of course I want it!"

Leafpool leaped over to Crowfeather and snatched the rabbit from his paws.

"It's mine now!" she exclaimed.

"Not for long!" Crowfeather yelled.

Crowfeather chased after Leafpool, and soon caught up to her. He jumped on his mate and bowled her over.

"You may be faster," Leafpool meowed, "but I'm stronger!"

Leafpool shoved Crowfeather off of her and rolled back onto her paws. Seconds later, Crowfeather was back on his feet. He stole the rabbit from Leafpool as soon as she let her guard down. Then he ran back to the top of the hill.

"If you want it, come and get it!" Crowfeather called.

Leafpool snuck through the long grass and made her way behind Crowfeather. When she was directly behind him, she pounced!

"Gotcha!" she yowled triumphantly.

"Crowfeather glanced over at the dust-covered rabbit. "Do you still want it?"

"It's the best we've got, considering that we have probably scared away every other animal out there."

"Yeah. The clan cats can probably hear us."

"I wonder if they recognize our voices."

"Maybe. I bet you a mouse Squirrelflight just heard you, and knows you are alright."

"She probably thinks that she was a bad sister, and I left because of her."

"Don't you dare think that. She is the best sister, and friend, a cat could ask for."

Crowfeather gave Leafpool's ear a comforting lick. They sat for a few moments, then remembered the rabbit. They both bit into it,

trying to ignore the dusty taste.

"Hey, once you get past all of the dirt on the outside, it isn't so bad!" Leafpool meowed.

"You're right. We should have been allowed to play with our food as kits, don't you think?" Crowfeather joked.

"Yeah."

The two sat for a while, swapping stories from their kithood and playing games. Orange and pink spread across the blue sky, eventually fading to a deep indigo. Silver specks of light glittered in the night.

Leafpool looked up at the sky and breathed three words, "StarClan watches us."

Chapter 2

Leafpool couldn't sleep. She glanced at Crowfeather, curled up beside her. *I can get back here by dawn,* Leafpool thought. Then she ran in the direction of the Moonpool.

It was the halfmoon medicine cat gathering. Leafpool could smell the others, Barkface, Littlecloud, Leafpool's friend Mothwing, and Cinderpelt.

Leafpool had missed them. The others didn't know that she left. They didn't have to know. Not yet, anyway.

"Leafpool?" someone was calling her name.

Leafpool froze, her muscles tensing. She sniffed the air, then relaxed. It was Cinderpelt. Leafpool slowly emerged from her hiding spot in the bushes.

"It is you! And you are okay! I've been worried sick! Squirrelflight must have searched every inch of the forest 3 times looking for you!" Cinderpelt exclaimed.

"Tell her I am fine, and calm down." Leafpool tried to soothe Cinderpelt, but it didn't do much good.

"Where have you been? What are you doing out here? Have you seen Crowfeather? Barkface says he is gone." Everything just came rushing out of Cinderpelt's mouth.

"I've been in the moors and forests just outside ThunderClan and WindClan territory. I've been with Crowfeather this whole time." Leafpool explained.

Cinderpelt nodded, seeming to understand.

Mothwing ran up next to Cinderpelt and began asking me even more questions. "What have you and Crowfeather been up to? Do you miss us? Why did you leave?"

"We have just been going about our lives ad spending time together. We will always miss you. We left so we could be together," Leafpool answered.

Barkface stepped out from behind Mothwing and dipped his head in greeting. "So Crowfeather is safe with you?" he asked.

"Yes, of course," Leafpool meowed.

Littlecloud ran up and joined the group, panting and out of breath. His eyes glanced over the group, then he noticed Leafpool. "Leafpool!" he exclaimed. "You're ok!"

"Yes, I am fine," Leafpool replied.

The group headed in the direction of the Moonpool. Leafpool trailed behind, feeling awkward.

Cinderpelt slowed down and allowed the others to grow further ahead, until she matched Leafpool's pace.

"This feels wrong somehow. Like I don't belong," Leafpool confessed.

"You probably don't," Cinderpelt agreed.

"Should I leave?" Leafpool asked.

"No. I can tell that you need to speak to Starclan one more time."

Leafpool silently agreed.

***

The stone was freezing cold beneath Leafpool's paws. She shivered. It wasn't a shiver of cold, though, not really. It was a shiver of fear.

Leafpool crouched and lapped up a bit of the water, allowing sleep to overtake her.

A shimmering starry world materialized before Leafpool, spreading out from her paws. Leafpool was standing in the middle of

Starclan's forest.

A beautiful young tortoiseshell she-cat was weaving her way through the trees, intent on something that Leafpool didn't see. She pounced, disappearing from Leafpool's view, and reappeared with a mouse in her jaws.

The tortoiseshell then noticed Leafpool for the first time. Her eyes widened, and she dropped her mouse. Emmediatly, she ran towards Leafpool.

"It's good to see you again, Spottedleaf," Leafpool greeted the Starclan cat.

"I wasn't expecting to see you. You really shouldn't be here!" Spottedleaf fretted.

"And she will probably never see you again, so if you have anything to say to her, now would be the time," Bluestar had emerged from the bushes, and her voice rang out loud and clear.

"Oh, I can assure you, I will be back," Leafpool meowed.

"You cannot live with a paw in each world," Bluestar meowed. She looked sad about something, as if she were remembering something from a long time ago.

Leafpool looked down at her paws. "I'm sorry, but you told me to choose my path, and I have. This is my future."

"I hope it is everything you believe it will be," Spottedleaf meowed.

Starclan's hunting grounds began fading away, until Leafpool was staring at empty blackness.

Leafpool blinked her eyes open, stood up, and stretched. Bluestar's words echoing in her mind, *"you cannot live with a paw in each world."*

Chapter 3

By the time Leafpool made it back to the nest she shared with Crowfeather, it was almost dawn, and a few rays of orangish light were creeping up over the horizon.

In the middle of the field was their nest of moss and bracken. Crowfeather was not in it. Leafpool curled up in the center of the nest, taking note of the fact that it was cold. Crowfeather had been gone a while.

Just as Leafpool began to fall asleep, a voice broke into her thoughts. "And so, the great and glorious medicine cat returns from her trip to the moonpool," Crowfeather scorned.

Leafpool's eyes blinked open, and she sat up. "I'm sorry, I just-"

"No excuses! I was worried! I had no idea where you had gone, and I found that you had gone back to your clanmates! Can you just forget about the Clans for once?" Crowfeather exclaimed.

Leafpool looked down at her paws.

Crowfeather sat next to Leafpool, so their pelts were brushing. "I'm sorry I got so angry. I'm just worried about you, and about what the Clans might do if they catch you. You cannot live with a paw in each world."

"I know. It's just such a difficult change! What if Cinderpelt can't find another apprentice? What if everyone hates me? What if I never see my family again?"

"You can go back. I don't mind."

Leafpool looked into Crowfeather's eyes. She saw sadness, and fear.

"No. I made my choice, and it was the right one. There is no going back now."

***

Rain poured down through the trees, soaking Squirrelflight's pelt completely. The forest seemed dark and gloomy.

"I lost her trail!" Cloudtail called from somewhere in the bushes.

Squirrelflight's heart sunk to her paws. Her sister was gone.

Thornclaw shoved his way through the bushes. "Cloudtail's right. The rain must have washed her scent away."

"Let me check." Squirrelflight slipped into the clump of bushes and made her way towards Cloudtail. "Is this where you lost her trail?" She asked.

"Yes. I'm really sorry," Cloudtail meowed.

Squirrelflight sniffed the air. Cloudtail was right. The scent was there one moment, then gone the next. What was left of the scent was already fading. "Fox dung!" Squirrelflight hissed.

Squirrelflight dashed away in the direction of the ThunderClan camp. She burst through the entrance and into the hollow.

In an instant, Ashfur was at Squirrelflight's side. "Did you find her?" Ashfur asked.

Squirrelflight looked up at him, eyes filled with sadness. She shook her head.

Ashfur's eyes were suddenly filled with an angry, menacing light. Squirrelflight hopped back a bit, startled by the abrupt change. "That traitor! She must die!" Ashfur sprinted towards the entrance.

Squirrelflight, filled with adrenaline, and powered by fear for her sister's life, took a flying leap at Ashfur and knocked him to the ground. "No one harms my sister! For all we know, she could be on some sort of heroic medicine cat quest!"

Squirrelflight unsheathed her claws and sank them deep into Ashfur's shoulder. Ashfur shoved her off, unsheathing his claws and

digging them into the ground. Then he leaped, and Squirrelflight flew at him and met him in midair. They hit the ground and rolled over and over, clawing at each other and hissing.

Finally, Ashfur had Squirrelflight pinned down. Blood flowed down from a wound on his ear, covering half of his face and giving him a menacing sort of look. His eyes were alight with hatred and anger, and Squirrelflight shuddered a bit.

"Leave my sister alone!" Squirrelflight growled.

"I'll leave her alone alright, when she's dead!"

"You're a monster!"

"Ever since you proved that you liked Brambleclaw better than me, I have wanted my revenge. I could kill you now, but what good would that do? I'll kill everyone you know and love, just to watch you suffer. I will kill every cat in every clan if that's what it takes to make you break! Your mate especially, because that will hurt you the most!" Ashfur glared at Brambleclaw through the pounding torrent of rain, who was in the crowd that had begun to gather around the fight.

"Not if I can help it!" Squirrelflight slipped out from Ashfur's grasp and sliced his neck clean open.

Blood flowed out of the wound, covering Ashfur and the ground at his paws. Ashfur collapsed, with Squirrelflight standing over him. Blood covered her paws, staining them red.

Squirrelflight looked out at the cats around her. "The traitor is dead!"

Sorreltail was backing away from Squirrelflight, clearly scared.

"He threatened to kill us all! He deserved it!"

Sorreltail shook her head. The other cats were backing away now too. Dustpelt leaped in front of Ferncloud and her kits, and Brightheart crouched in front of the elders den. Other cats were beginning to get into fighting stances too. But they weren't staring

at Squirrelflight. They were staring behind her.

Squirrelflight slowly turned around, and what she saw was more horrifying than anything she had ever seen before.

It was Ashfur, back on his paws, with his claws unsheathed and his teeth bared. He was completely covered in his own blood, but somehow still standing. His eyes had a crazed look to them, like he wasn't mentally right. Then again, considering the recent events, Squirrelflight decided that he probably wasn't.

Squirrelflight unsheathed her claws and bared her teeth, ready for a fight to the death, but Ashfur collapsed. "I will get you... someday," he hissed. "That's a promise." His voice grew fainter as he spoke, finally fading away into nothing.

Cinderpelt padded to Ashfur's side and pressed her paw to his chest, feeling for his pulse. "He's dead," she confirmed.

"He was a fine warrior," Firestar began, "but he let his hatred get away from him. Without Squirrelflight, many lives could have been lost today." Firestar dipped his head to his daughter.

"B-but she's a murderer," one of Ferncloud's kits squeaked.

"Murder for a good cause isn't murder, it's survival," Firestar meowed. The kit did not have a reply to this.

Squirrelflight looked down at her paws, which were stained red with Ashfur's blood. She ran to the nearest puddle to wash them.

When Squirrelflight saw her reflection, she was horrified. Her eyes were wild with rage and excitement, and her whole body was splattered in blood. Some was hers, but most was Ashfur's.

Squirrelflight darted away, towards the warriors den. Upon reaching her nest, she collapsed, her head in her paws. *I'm a monster.*

Chapter 4

Leafpool crouched down low, sniffing the air for prey. The faintest trace of fox, the stale scent of rabbit, and the fresh aroma of mouse.

Leafpool slid through the grass, following the mouse's trail. The grasses ahead of her twitched, and she leaped, trapping the mouse between her paws. She reached down to give it a killing bite.

She stood up, the mouse secured between her teeth, and realized how far she had come.

Standing in front of her was a hollow, with a dirt floor. Inside stood a huge oak tree, with large, moss-covered roots. Beside the tree was a pool of water that looked deep enough to fish in, but not deep enough to be dangerous. The rest of the hollow was empty space, waiting to be used.

I have to tell Crowfeather! He will want to know. Leafpool buried her mouse in the hollow and set off to find Crowfeather.

When Leafpool arrived at camp, she found Crowfeather sitting in his nest, licking himself clean.

Crowfeather's ear-tip twitched. "You're back."

"Yes," Leafpool meowed.

"No prey?"

"I caught a mouse and a bird. Now get up. We are moving."

"Very short-notice."

"I found a decent camp."

"Okay."

"Get up already!" Leafpool swatted at Crowfeather's face.

Crowfeather stood up and stretched, then fell into step behind Leafpool.

Somewhere about halfway between the old camp and the hollow, Leafpool stopped to uncover her bird.

"So you aren't a bad hunter after all," Crowfeather commented.

"That was completely unnecessary," Leafpool mumbled around her bird.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity of walking, Leafpool arrived at the camp. Crowfeather glanced around, his gaze reaching every corner of the camp.

"So?" Leafpool asked. "What do you think?"

"It's great!" Crowfeather meowed, his pelt brushing Leafpool's.

"I know, isn't it perfect? It just needs a lot of work, if we are going to turn this place into a camp. We need a thorn barrier, and we could build a warriors den around the tree, using branches from bramble bushes. The freshkill pile should be near the pool, but not too close that heavy rain flooding the pool could destroy it. The leader could make announcements from-"

"Leafpool." Crowfeather cut her off. "This isn't a clan. It's just us."

"But it could be, right?" Leafpool asked.

Crowfeather looked down at his paws. "It's not likely. Where would we find cats who would be willing to join us? The other clans wouldn't ever accept us. We would be known as traitors forever."

"Rogues needing protection and adventurous kittypets would make up most of the clan, along with our kits. The other clans wouldn't need to know we existed." Leafpool explained it all so well that Crowfeather looked tempted to give in to the idea.

"I don't know," Crowfeather meowed.

"Crowfeather, I'm sorry," Leafpool murmured. "I keep forgetting that it's just us now. It's just so different."

Crowfeather gave Leafpool an affectionate lick. "I know. It's okay. I miss my clanmates too, and it'll take some time to get used to it, but what matters is that we have each other, okay?"

"Okay."

***

Night was falling. A newleaf breeze rustled the tree branches. Squirrelflight shivered a bit. The days were growing warmer, but nights were still cold.

The shadows weren't the best for hiding her ginger pelt, but they did well enough. Squirrelflight kept to the shadows, attempting to stay out of Thornclaw's view. (He was guarding the camp entrance.)

Squirrelflight slipped through the dirtplace exit, then broke into a run. She just wanted to escape everything that had happened in the forest over the past few days, and leave it all behind her.

Squirrelflight knew that no matter what, she had to find Leafpool.

Chapter 5

Leafpool woke up the next morning, trying to remember where she was. Then, the events of the day before came flooding back.

She was in their new camp. She had thought about creating a clan, and accidentally blurted her thoughts out to Crowfeather, who clearly didn't feel the same. Leafpool missed her clan, sure, but did she actually want to create a new one? The more she thought about it, the more confused she became.

Leafpool stood up and stretched. Crowfeather was still in his nest beside her, sleeping. His paws twitched. Leafpool wondered if he was dreaming of running across the moors with his clanmates.

Leafpool shook the thought away, not wanting believe that her suspicions were probably true.

Slipping out of the shallow dip in the earth, Leafpool wandered away, searching for something to hunt for Crowfeather. However, her mind was elsewhere.

She spied a mouse running through the tall grasses, nibbling on some berries from a nearby raspberry bush. She crouched, slowly stalking the tiny creature.

A loud crack sounded through the air. Leafpool looked down and saw two pieces of a broken twig beneath her paw. When she looked up, the mouse was gone.

Focus, Leafpool, she said to herself.

She sniffed the air, picking up the fresh scent of rabbit in the breeze. Thinking that Crowfeather would appreciate something that he was used to eating, she followed the scent.

Knowing that she could not outrun the rabbit, she got downwind of

her prey and stalked it. The rabbit's ears perked up, it could hear her. She swiftly pounced, killing the rabbit with a bite to the neck.

Carrying it back to camp, she thought she caught a whiff of ThunderClan cat scent, but it disappeared. Thinking that she had imagined it, she padded onwards.

When Crowfeather woke up, he was pleased to find that there was a rabbit waiting for him. He meowed his thanks, but Leafpool was distracted by the fact that she had smelled a ThunderClan cat while she was hunting.

"What's wrong?" Crowfeather asked, his eyes conveying worry and fear.

Leafpool stood up from where she was sitting. "It's nothing," she meowed. "I was just thinking about how I should go out herb gathering this morning. We really need some medicine in case we get attacked."

"By what?" Crowfeather looked at Leafpool quizzically.

Leafpool sighed. "Foxes, badgers, rouges, who knows what. You're the warrior. You should know this!" Leafpool's words were harsh, but her expression playful.

Much to Crowfeather's surprise, Leafpool turned away, bounding out of the clearing and into the grasses beyond. "I'm going herb gathering. You should take the day off. After all of the stress of being a warrior and defending your clan, you need it."

Leafpool's tail disappeared into the tall grasses. Herbs were at the back of her mind. Really, she was just thinking about how she needed to find her sister.

Chapter 6

As Leafpool walked, the scent of Thunderclan in the breeze got stronger, as did Leafpool's urgency to find the source, which she was sure was Squirrelflight.

In the back of her mind, Leafpool felt a tickling sense, an emotion that was not her own. A frantic urgency to find something, but Leafpool didn't know what.

Leafpool picked up the pace, her need to find Squirrelflight renewed. She walked quicker, almost running now. Her sister was nearby, she could sense it, and she desperately wanted to see her kin again.

Living with Crowfeather had been nice, sure, but she felt the need to see someone familiar.

Leafpool ran across the Moor, leaping over clumps of herbs and darting around bushes. The ThunderClan scent what's stronger than before, and it was most definitely Squirrelflight's. It smelled of home, making Leafpool nostalgic. *No, the Moors are my home now,* leafpool thought, pushing away the rebellious thoughts.

Leafpool continued running, almost jumping straight over the ginger cat who was lying stretched out across the ground.

"Leafpool!" Squirrelflight exclaimed. "it's so good to see you!"

"Squirrelflight!" Leafpool touched noses with her sister. "I've missed you!"

"I thought I would never see you again. I just need a place to stay for a few moons before I go back to my clan. Can I stay with you?" Squirrelflight asked. "I will explain it all at your camp."

"It's fine with me, of course, but Crowfeather won't like this being thrown at him."

"I can ask him myself, of course. I'm sure he still remembers me from the great journey."

"Follow me," Leafpool meowed, trotting off through the long grasses.

Squirrelflight followed, and the pair padded off together, towards Leafpool's new camp.

The siblings exchanged trivial information, about new kits in ThunderClan, the best elder's tales, and how prey had been running.

In the back of Leafpool's mind, however, she still wondered why Squirrelflight had come to her asking for a place to stay for a few moons. Squirrelflight had always gotten along quite well with her other clanmates, and it would make no sense that all of a sudden she had done something so horrible that ThunderClan had exiled her.

Chapter 7

"I never got exiled, but I was afraid that everyone would be scared of me, and would never look at me the same way again," Squirrelflight finished.

"You're always welcome here," Leafpool meowed, wrapping her tail around her sister's shoulders comfortingly.

Crowfeather said nothing, but he nodded in agreement.

It was agreed that Squirrelflight could stay, as long as she didn't bring Leafpool and Crowfeather any trouble.

A few sunrises passed, and Leafpool and Squirrelflight decided to go hunting together, and catch up on what had been happening in their lives.

Squirrelflight chased after a rabbit, but she was not built for running over long distances, and the rabbit got away, into its hole.

"That's okay, you can try again." Leafpool meowed when Squirrelflight looked discouraged.

"In ThunderClan, I almost never miss a piece of prey!" Squirrelflight grumbled.

"The moors are different. You need endurance."

You haven't been here for long either!"

"That's why I stick to the mice hiding in the grass." Leafpool meowed.

"You get mice here?"

"Listen for them."

Leafpool tasted the air. A mouse was nearby. Leafpool crouched,

stalking towards the mouse, before realizing that Squirrelflight was already in position to pounce.

Squirrelflight leaped, and the mouse's high-pitched scream of terror was cut short. Squirrelflight emerged from the tall grasses, a mouse in her jaws. She scraped earth on the prey, planning to take it back to camp later.

Leafpool and Squirrelflight returned to camp, laden with prey.

After setting down the prey on the fresh-kill pile, Squirrelflight asked, "what do you miss most about ThunderClan, now that you are with Crowfeather?"

Leafpool answered immediately. "You, of course! But now you're here, so I don't know. What about you?"

Squirrelflight pondered the question for a moment. "Probably Brambleclaw. I was just getting to know him better, and then I had to leave."

"Was he your mate?" Leafpool asked teasingly.

"It wasn't like that!" Squirrelflight swatted at Leafpool's cheek.

"Attacking a medicine cat! How rude!" Leafpool exclaimed with mock anger.

"I'm sorry, your highness!" Squirrelflight bowed down to her sister.

Leafpool sighed and rolled her eyes, but her twitching whiskers betrayed her, showing her amusement.

" Come on, let's eat." Leafpool bit into a mouse while Squirrelflight dug through the pile, searching for a vole.

Chapter 8

"C'mon! C'mon! Leafpool, wake up! We're going battle training!"

"Squirrelflight!" I'm still trying to sleep!"

"I'm not going to let you!" Squirrelflight declared.

Leafpool sighed, getting to her paws. "Stop it! I wanted to sleep!"

"Leafpool! It's sunhigh already!" Squirrelflight flopped onto the ground, looking exasperated.

"Fine...."

Squirrelflight leaped to her paws, bounding towards the camp entrance.

"Squirrelflight where are we going?" Leafpool asked.

"Don't talk. Just walk," Squirrelflight said slyly.

Squirrelflight was beginning to return to her energetic self, and seemed much more like the Squirrelflight that Leafpool knew and loved. As Leafpool followed her sister, she thought about all the time that they had spent together as apprentices. Reminiscing on old times made her feel happy, and reminded her better days, although she loved being with Crowfeather. Leafpool, like anybody away from her clan, missed her family, friends, and the people that she grew up with.

"What you thinking about, little sis?" Squirrelflight asked.

"Forgetting something, Squirrelflight?" Leafpool asked.

"Huh?" Squirrelflight meowed.

"I'm the older one!" Leafpool sighed with exasperation.

"We're here!" Squirrelflight exclaimed!

Leafpool looked around. Squirrelflight's pushed through the tall green grass, revealing a hollow in the ground. There was no grass in the hollow, and it look like at one point the hollow was been used for many dens for foxes or badgers. However, it appeared that most of the old dens have been filled in, probably by Squirrelflight.

"Wow, Squirrelflight! This is so neat!" Leafpool looked around. She couldn't believe that Squirrelflight had done all of this for her, even though she was a Medicine Cat, not a warrior.

"It was the least I could do. You and Crowfeather let me stay here, so it's right that I repay the favor. You were never trained as a warrior, so I feel it's right to teach you. Even just a little bit, but you still need to know how to defend yourself in the wild. I don't want anything to take you by surprise." Squirrelflight stood up a bit straighter.

"What should I know?"

Squirrelflight begin to demonstrate some basics, then moved on to more challenging maneuvers. Leafpool obviously wasn't a pro, but she was a quick learner.

However, Leafpool tired quickly.

"Leafpool, what happened to the cat who would trek through the forest for so long searching for herbs to cure every clanmate in need? Where is your endurance?" Squirrelflight shamed her older sister.

"I don't know. Maybe I'm just tired," Leafpool meowed, trying to scoot past Squirrelflight and back towards camp.

"I woke you up at sunhigh! You slept for so long!"

"I don't know about you, but I'm going back to camp," Leafpool edged around her sister.

Squirrelflight reluctantly followed, dragging her paws and tail on the ground like a whiny apprentice.

***

The stars twinkled in the night sky, far above Leafpool's head. She looked at her sister, fast asleep next to her, curled up in her nest. Leafpool, on the other hand, couldn't sleep.

Crowfeather was watching the camp, on guard near the entrance. *I can talk to him.*

Leafpool slipped out of her nest, padding through the shadows, the white bits of her fur seeming to glow in the pale light cast by the moon.

"Crowfeather," Leafpool whispered, "I need to talk to you."

Crowfeather turned to look at his mate, his blue eyes glittering and standing out against his black fur. "You look like you've been putting on some weight there," Crowfeather joked.

"That's what I need to talk to you about," Leafpool meowed, although she looked very serious. "I think I'm expecting your kits."

***

A/N

1. Leafpool is actually the older sibling.

2. Thanks so much for over 700 reads! We are so close to my goal of 1k!

Thanks so much for reading!

~Hollyfeather

Chapter 9

"Leafpool, this is wonderful!" Crowfeather purred, rubbing against his mate's cheek.

Leafpool stared into space, still shocked. She saw one flaw. A huge, fatal flaw. *I know how much Squirrelflight loves her clan, especially Brambleclaw. I don't ever want to keep her away from that. She isn't going to stay here forever.*

"Leafpool?" Crowfeather asked, nudging her cheek with the tip of his nose. "Everything alright?"

Leafpool shook off her daze. "Yeah, everything's fine." Leafpool gave Crowfeather's ear a lick.

"Everything's gonna be alright," Crowfeather reassured her.

"I know. I don't doubt your words. I think I just need a walk to clear my head. Maybe I'll gather some herbs, or catch us some prey."

"Of course," Crowfeather purred. "I know it must be quite a shocking realization, expecting kits all of a sudden."

"I just need to have some time to myself, you know?" Leafpool touched noses with her mate, a friendly goodbye, before padding away, into the tall grass.

Leafpool didn't want to seem suspicious, so she swiftly caught and killed a mouse. Not much prey was out and about at that time of night, but she managed.

Leafpool turned, away from the moors and towards the old Clan territories. She began to run, gaining speed with every pawstep, until she was traveling swiftly across the open moors.

Finally, Leafpool skidded to a halt. She padded down the ancient stone path, spiraling slowly into the earth. She could feel the divots made by her ancestors' paws walking this same path. However, she

no longer felt connected to them.

Leafpool knelt down at the edge of the water. She looked into the pool, searching for the reflections of the stars above, but even though stars speckled the sky, she could see none in the pool.

The Moonpool. The place Leafpool discovered herself, as a wee little apprentice, so long ago.

Leafpool knelt down, staring into the pool. She touched her nose to the water.

Nothing.

Leafpool had made her choice, and Starclan wasn't coming back to her anymore.

I may miss the guidance of Starclan, but I regret nothing. I can make my own decisions.

Leafpool understood that whether Starclan came to her or not, the ending result would be the same. She would have Crowfeather's kits, and her sister would probably leave before then.

That was when Leafpool decided that she wouldn't tell Squirrelflight about her kits. She didn't want to hold her sister back.

Leafpool stopped to gather some stems of borage and retrieve her mouse, before returning to her mate and sister.

What they don't know can't hurt them.

~~~

I'm sorry that the last few chapters have been a bit drab, but I'm building up to something big.

Leafpool is supposed to be a bit attached to Starclan, constantly looking to them for guidance, so without them, she will have her struggles. After discovering the Moonpool and bonding with so many Starclan cats, she tends to be really
~~~

close to them. Coping is going to be one of her obstacles in the future, although it's hard to tell at first.

Thank you so much for all of your support! I'm overjoyed that all of you appreciate my writing and continue to come to me for more chapters. I know that there hasn't been much time between this update and the last one, so this is how I am thanking all of my loyal readers!

Thx!

~Hollyfeather

Chapter 10

Three sunrises had passed since Leafpool visited the Moonpool for the second time. Leafpool awoke, Crowfeather beside her. She stood up and stretched, before noticing that her sister was gone. *I bet she's hunting for the rest of us.*

Sure enough, Squirrelflight appeared through the camp entrance, jaws filled with prey. Her eyes seemed to bore into Leafpool's soul, and she sure didn't look happy.

Dropping her prey onto the ground, she meowed, "Leafpool, I think we need to talk."

Squirrelflight stalked out of the camp at a quick pace, and Leafpool had to scurry along behind, struggling to keep up without running.

"Wait up!" Leafpool exclaimed, confused.

Squirrelflight's tail lashed back and forth, and her ears were flat back against her head. "Walk faster then."

Her harsh, scalding tone stung, and Leafpool shrunk back a little bit.

"Squirrelflight...." Leafpool trailed off, knowing that there was no calming her sister.

Squirrelflight spun around, stopping suddenly. "I can't believe you!"

Leafpool backed away, confused. "What?"

"You didn't tell me about the kits!"

Leafpool shifted nervously.

"Your kits?"

"How did you-"

"Don't believe everything you see! Of course, I can pretend to be asleep, don't you do that sometimes?"

"Once, and we were apprentices!"

Squirrelflight sighed. "This is pointless. You are expecting. You didn't tell me. I'm upset. Geez."

"Alright, so you're mad, but you knew anyway."

"But it's betrayal. Don't you see? I'm your sister, and you always used to tell me everything! Why change now?"

"I didn't want-" Leafpool was trailed off as Squirrelflight turned tail and darted away.

Miserable, Leafpool trudged back towards her home. She knew Crowfeather would be waiting for her, but even he couldn't cheer him up. Her sister would always be more important than everyone else. *Starclan, help me. I'm sorry. Oh, what did I do wrong?*

Crowfeather brushed his face against Leafpool's, but she just ignored him. Her sister was gone.

Leafpool tried to convince herself that Squirrelflight just needed some time to relax and cool down, and then she would be back. But a little voice inside of her said, *She's gone and she's not coming back. She's running back to her Clan as I speak.*

Would I have left my Clan, if I had known it would cause me so much pain?

Chapter 11

"Leafpool, I'm going hunting, okay?" Crowfeather meowed.

Leafpool stared at the ground despondently, unresponsive.

"Alright then," Crowfeather meowed, padding into the tall, green grass.

Leafpool continued to lie on the ground, thoughts whizzing through her head.

What's the point?

She went back to Brambleclaw, didn't she?

I'm all alone...

This isn't right.

Is Starclan punishing me?

I need some help!!!

***

The huge striped creature loomed over her, baring its fangs and threatening her with his claws, swiping too close, only for her to dodge away.

"Midnight? Is that you? No?" Squirrelflight dodged away from another attack.

The badger reared, growling.

"Sorry! It's not my fault that my sister is such a thorn in my paw sometimes!"

The badger leaped at Squirrelflight, his blunt nails digging into her

shoulder, tearing through the skin. She leaped away, out of the beast's grasp, hissing in pain.

She vaulted over the badger's back, sinking her claws into the thick fur on his back. She struggled to find a paw-hold, nipping at the badger's ears and swiping her paws into his face, attempting to hit his eyes.

The badger shook himself, sending Squirrelflight flying into the grass, winded. She stumbled to her paws, leaping back at the badger. Taking him by surprise, she scratched her claws down his side. His blood spilled across the ground.

Squirrelflight reared onto her hind paws, aiming a swipe towards the badger's face, but he caught her paw in his jaws, biting down hard. Squirrelflight heard a crunch, and pain flared up her leg like fire. She yowled in pain and surprise.

"Squirrelflight, get out of here!" a voice exclaimed.

"Crowfeather!"

"Leave! Get back to Leafpool!"

"I can't leave you here!"

"Go!"

Squirrelflight limped away as fast as her wounded paw could carry her, not looking back. That was a mistake.

Pain shot through Squirrelflight's tail. "Get off of me, you dung-face!" She yelped.

The badger's claws scraped down her side, and she spun around, trying her best to attack without further aggravating her injured leg.

Then, Crowfeather was beside her, fighting by Squirrelflight's side.

"Run," he hissed.

Squirrelflight bolted. Well, she stumbled, but she moved pretty fast, considering she was covered in scratches, and her paw was twisted and in pain.

Black spots danced at the edges of her vision, and she teetered on her paws. A trail of blood dripped behind her. *Just a bit further....*

Then, the blackness consumed her, and she fell down, her mind consumed by endless nothing.

***

A/N:

1. Squirrelflight isn't dead... yet. No guarantees on whether or not she will survive.

2. Star of the week is @yellowfang-lover for all of his/her wonderful support! Thanks for over 800 reads! We're so close to 1k now!

3. I made a slight change to this for plot purposes... her paw isn't broken, it is twisted.

New update soon! I love you all! Thx for reading!

A/N

Hey everyone! I'm really happy about the positive feedback and wonderful support I've gotten! 813 reads is great!

Shoutout to everyone who has supported me in some way:

starrshard

And of course, all of my readers!

Thanks to all of these people for adding Leafpool's Choice to their reading list!

That took a while!

Now that we are done with shoutouts, onto the point!

Leafpool's Choice is almost halfway done! Thx for all of your support. You encouraged me to write.

There will be a sequel! But the character (one of Leafpool's kits) might die young.

"Destiny isn't a path that any cat follows blindly. It is always a matter of choice, and sometimes the heart speaks loudest."

-Leafpool, Sign of the Moon, pg. 108

Thx for the support!

~Hollyfeather

Chapter 12

Leafpool was alone. The camp was hers, for the moment. *Crowfeather should be here by now....*

And then, she smelled something strange. A tinge of blood drifted through the air. Squirrelflight!

She leaped to her paws, following her sister's fear-scent.

There she was, in the grass beside camp. Her thin body was battered and broken. Blood dyed her orange fur red, splattering her paws and tail, dripping from her sides. Her leg was twisted at an awkward angle. She was lying there, so torn apart and bloodied, and Leafpool looked at her sister with acceptance, carrying her back to camp.

She immediately assessed her sister's worst injuries and got to work, her paws working furiously to cover all of the wounds with cobwebs and herbs, pop her leg back into place since it was dislocated, and provide wet moss and water for when she woke up.

If she wakes up, the little voice in Leafpool's head squeaked.

Leafpool tried to shake away the thought, but it stayed there, gloating. In Leafpool's gut, she knew very well that the little voice might be right.

***

The next few days were a blur for Squirrelflight. Even though she wasn't awake and conscious, her mind was very good at providing distractions for Squirrelflight that seemed to reflect her heart's desires.

She was back in her Clan, Thunderclan. In most of her dreams, like this one, she had Brambleclaw's kits. Leafpool was with her, and everyone was happy.

Until Ashfur returned.

He was as bloodied and gruesome as Squirrelflight remembered, his fur shredded, his eyes wild, and his whole body soaked in blood. Whether it was his own or the blood of his enemies, Squirrelflight had no idea this time.

He shook and teetered on his paws a bit, but in an instant, Leafpool was on the ground in a pool of blood.

She spun around, her heart beating faster, threatening to burst out of her chest.

There was Brambleclaw, bleeding from cuts all over his body. Her kits were at her paws, all of their tiny heads twisted at awkward angles. Her parents were across the camp, fur torn and bleeding, collapsed next to each other. The rest of her clanmates were all dead, bleeding or with broken necks or spines.

Squirrelflight collapsed as the terror began to set in.

And then, it all faded to black. She watched herself, sitting on the shore of the lake with Brambleclaw, tails entwined.

"Brambleclaw?" the older her meowed.

"Yes?" an older version of Brambleclaw purred.

"I have wonderful news! We're going to have kits!"

A little voice in Squirrelflight's head mewed, This could be us, someday.

A/N

Originally Squirrelflight's leg was broken, but I changed it to fit with what comes later.

Chapter 13

Leafpool had sat nervously beside her sister all night, and exhaustion was slowly dragging her eyes shut. Squirrelflight's breathing had returned to normal, except for once when she appeared to be panicking. Her heartbeat was steady, and none of her wounds seemed infected. Leafpool was a bit worried about Squirrelflight's leg, though. It wasn't broken, just dislocated, but it could be painful.

Leafpool's eyes began to close. She couldn't keep them open much longer. Then, Squirrelflight shifted, mumbling something, and her eyes opened a bit.

"Huh? Where am I?" A look of confusion appeared on Squirrelflight's face, followed by anger. "The badger! Where's Crowfeather? What happened?"

"Calm down," Leafpool tried to reassure her sister. "I'll explain everything when Crowfeather gets back. Now, what do you remember?"

"I stormed away. I couldn't see the badger set... attacked... Crowfeather saved me...."

"Alright. That would explain the bites and the smell of badger all over you."

"How'd I get here?"

"I found you near the camp entrance, passed out. I dragged you here."

Squirrelflight licked her chest fur, embarrassed. "I should've been able to walk a few more tail-lengths...."

"No, you were really beat up. You were lucky to make it as far as you did."

Squirrelflight tried to stand, tottering on her paws. "Where's Crowfeather?"

"He's out hunting. And before you ask, he's fine. He escaped the badger with just a few minor wounds."

"Oh, good."

"Listen, Squirrelflight, I'm really sorry that I didn't tell you about the kits."

"But..." Squirrelflight trailed off.

"Fine," Leafpool meowed reluctantly. "I didn't want to hold you back from your clan. I know you aren't going to stay forever, and I didn't want you to feel the need to stay."

"Okay, that is a good reason."

"And you're sorry for..."

"Overreacting and being so stubborn. I knew you were expecting kits even without overhearing you. I shouldn't have blown up like that."

"I'm glad we're in agreement," Leafpool gave her sister's ear an affectionate lick. "Now you should get some rest."

Squirrelflight curled up into a tiny ball as Leafpool applied new herbs to her wounds. Her herb stores were running low, and she had barely any marigold left. Rolling up some thyme leaves, with poppy seeds hidden inside, she dropped them at Squirrelflight's paws.

"Here. These will help with the shock and help you sleep while I work," Leafpool meowed.

Thanks, Leafpool," Squirrelflight said, her eyelids beginning to droop.

Leafpool's own eyes were starting to close, even without poppy seeds.

Leafpool could hear a shuffling sound outside. "Leafpool, take a break. I can watch Squirrelflight." It was Crowfeather.

"Thanks," Leafpool meowed, curling up in her den and drifting off to sleep.

A/N

I'm over halfway done now!

Thanks to everyone's wonderful support! So close to 1k reads now! (932)

Squirrelflight's leg was broken before, but the story has to go quicker than that so it was just dislocated. I changed everything to fit.

Chapter 14

Leafpool slowly opened her eyes, the world coming into focus around her.

Squirrelflight was curled up, peacefully asleep, and Crowfeather sat beside her nest, but he was watching Leafpool.

"This reminds me of the great journey, when me and Squirrelflight and the other four traveled to the sun-drown place and back," Crowfeather meowed.

"You told me about it. Squirrelflight really got stuck in some twoleg vines?"

Crowfeather's whiskers twitched in amusement. "Yeah."

Leafpool stood up, stretching. "I have to go get more marigold. I'll return soon!"

Leafpool padded off into the tall grass, the stalks swaying in rhythm. Sniffing the air, she tried to pick up a trace of the healing herb.

Instead, she picked up a different, yet still familiar, scent carried in the breeze. Thunderclan? Could someone from her home really have come to her from camp?

Leafpool blinked, and it was gone. *Must be my imagination. I don't deserve a visit anyway. I* left *them.*

Leafpool padded on, following the lingering scent of marigold in the breeze.

The first patch she found had been completely eaten away by rabbits, but as she continued, it wasn't long before a large crop of marigold hidden away in the tall stalks of grass.

Snipping the stems with her teeth, Leafpool carried the plants back

to camp in her jaws.

As Leafpool padded into camp, the first thing she noticed was cheerful chatter from the medicine den.

What a sound! It was something Leafpool hadn't heard in forever, but it came with a piercing sorrow in her heart, reminding her of the clan that she had lost.

Upon reaching the medicine den, Leafpool found the source of the conversation.

"I wonder how Stormfur and the Tribe of the Rushing Water are now?" Crowfeather inquired.

"He seemed happy when we left him," Squirrelflight meowed. "After all, he's with the love of his life."

Leafpool could hear the slight tinge of longing in her sister's tone, something that Crowfeather never would have noticed.

Just then, the wind changed, blowing fresh scents into camp.

"Is it just me or do I smell-"

Leafpool finished her sister's thought. "Thunderclan!"

No updates for a while, and I am very sorry about that. Thanks to yellowfang-lover for the Thunderclan idea. Short chapter, but I will update again soon. I am very preoccupied with the joint account that I am part of, TheFourOfTransit
Thanks to @1Waterstar for adding my story to your reading list.
Also, thanks to @DevilDragonSlayer for voting!

~Hollyfeather

Chapter 15

Leafpool awoke to a thin layer of frost coating the grass, warning of the approaching Leaf-bare.

Crowfeather's nest was empty and cold, so Leafpool just assumed that he was out hunting.

As Leafpool began changing the cobweb bandage on her sister's leg, she heard a rustling.

It's nothing, she thought, *just the wind, or Crowfeather returning.*

It wasn't Crowfeather, and Leafpool certainly didn't feel a breeze, but she didn't scent much out of the ordinary besides a mouse scuttling through the grass nearby. Leafpool tried to shake the thoughts away, but as time went on, she felt more and more like there was another cat nearby.

"Leafpool, do you remember when I tried to sneak out of camp as a kit?" Squirrelflight chattered on, remembering the numerous times she got stuck in bushes as an apprentice, her mischievous escapades, and everything else from their childhood.

Leafpool just nodded and agreed at the right times, not really paying much attention, noting that her sister was in a very good mood on this cold, frosty day.

The scent of ThunderClan and WindClan cats together wafted through the camp entrance.

Crowfeather roughly shoved a brown tabby tom through the camp entrance. "I found this ThunderClan creep lurking around the camp," he growled.

"Squirrelflight's eyes widened. "Brambleclaw?"

Brambleclaw ran towards his mate. "Squirrelflight! I've been looking

everywhere for you!"

Leafpool intercepted the tomcat, stepping in front of her sister. "Woah, woah, woah," she meowed, "Squirrelflight's injured."

Brambleclaw stepped around the medicine cat, eyes brimming with affection for his mate. He knelt down, touching noses with her. "I've missed you."

"If you think she's coming back to ThunderClan with you today, then you are mistaken." Leafpool regarded the warrior with caution, watching his every move in case he came too close to her sister.

"Great StarClan, I'm sorry," Brambleclaw joked, backing away from Squirrelflight.

Squirrelflight's whiskers twitched with amusement. Then, her face fell, shifting to confusion. "Why'd you come for me?"

"'Cause I love you," Brambleclaw purred. "Leafpool and Crowfeather aren't the only ones happy in love."

Crowfeather bristled, and Leafpool felt herself growing hot under her fur, embarrassed.

"Listen, you need to go. If Squirrelflight isn't going with you, then just leave now." Crowfeather glared at Brambleclaw.

"Crowfeather...." Leafpool trailed off.

"She needs to rest," Crowfeather meowed, looking pointedly at Squirrelflight.

Squirrelflight shakily got to her paws. Her pelt was laced with fresh scars and healing wounds. She was practically covered in cobwebs. Squirrelfight's tail was lashing furiously, and her tail was back.

Squirrelflight stalked up to Crowfeather. "I don't need *anything*."

Leafpool leaped in between the pair. "Stop," she meowed. Then she proceeded to address each cat separately. "Squirrelflight, don't be so stubborn. Crowfeather is right. Crowfeather, you may be right, but

you have to stop picking fights with everyone."

Squirrelflight slunk back to her nest, and Brambleclaw began to comfort her in hushed tones.

Crowfeather glared defiantly at his mate, but he couldn't stay mad at her for long. His expression soon softened.

"I should go," Brambleclaw meowed. He looked awkward, being the topic of a fight that he wasn't part of.

"But-" Squirrelflight was cut off by Leafpool.

"We'll miss you, Brambleclaw. Until we meet again."

Leafpool turned away, padding towards her herb stores and past her sister.

Leafpool was positive that she heard her sister say something to Brambleclaw under her breath. She wasn't sure, but it sounded like, "That will be sooner than you think."

A/N: Thanks to @Celestial_Sunlight for the follow, thanks to @Celestial_Sunlight and @yellowfang-lover for the votes, and thanks to @Shadowsrom for adding Leafpool's Choice to your reading list.

Dedicated to yellowfang-lover for giving me the Brambleclaw idea. :)

Chapter 16

Three sunrises had passed since Brambleclaw had visited. Strong gales of wind rushed through the camp, nipping noses and sending beautifully colored late fall leaves dancing across the sky.

It was on this frosty day that Leafpool and Crowfeather shared tongues in camp. Squirrelflight was out hunting, and she insisted that she would be fine, and would only be out till sunhigh. With the gray clouds covering the sky, however, it would be hard to judge.

"The kits will be coming soon," Leafpool murmured.

Crowfeather's rough tongue rasped over his mate's ear. "I know," he meowed.

Leafpool and Crowfeather sat together in silence, simply enjoying their closeness. Their love seemed to be enough to keep them warm and happy even on the gloomy day that it was.

Leafpool shivered a bit, and Crowfeather pressed closer to her, purring.

Leafpool purred a bit, relaxing. *This is what I left ThunderClan for.* Pure joy and love was welling up in Leafpool's heart, sweet and tender and beautiful, like a rose in full bloom.

The beautiful moment was ruined by Squirrelflight bouncing into camp, jaws filled with prey. All of the critters were gathering food for the winter, and it seemed that there was plenty of food for catching.

"I feel great!" Squirrelflight announced.

Leafpool scurried to her sister's side, shooting an apologetic glance at Crowfeather. "Actually, you look great too. Your wounds are healing as expected."

Squirrelflight bounced up and down a bit, about to say something,

but then clamped her mouth shut tight.

"What's on your mind?" Leafpool asked.

Squirrelflight, startled out of her imagination, meowed, "what?"

"I said, what's on your mind?" Leafpool meowed, a bit louder now.

"Oh, nothing," Squirrelflight meowed.

"Is it Brambleclaw?" Leafpool asked.

Squirrelflight shifted uncomfortably. She didn't respond for a moment.

"Maybe...."

Leafpool's whiskers twitched with amusement, and gave her sister a playful nudge.

However, Squirrelflight didn't seem to be in a joking mood. "I just miss him so much! He's the most wonderful cat in the world! I'm sure you can relate," Squirrelflight meowed. "After all, you were separated from Crowfeather for a while before you left the clan."

Leafpool nodded. "I know it's hard, but I made it through it, and so will you."

Squirrelflight glared at the ground reluctantly, and didn't respond.

That night, Leafpool went to bed with a sick feeling in her stomach and a heavy heart. *Squirrelflight isn't going to stay with me forever, and for all I know, tomorrow could be my last day with her.*

A/N: Hi everyone! Thanks to everyone who votes!!

Also, thank you to @LucyStar352 **and** @SoBo32 **for adding my story to their reading list(s).**

Chapter 17

Leafpool awoke from a dream of Ashfur pushing kittens off of a cliff.

That was weird, she thought to herself.

"Good morning, Leafpool!" Squirrelflight bounced to her sister.

"Hi," Leafpool meowed. She looked around the camp. Crowfeather was still asleep.

"Want to go hunting with me?" Squirrelflight asked.

"Sure," Leafpool replied.

"Besides, I have something important to tell you. Walk with me, sister."

Squirrelflight padded off, her tail disappearing into the stalks of grass.

"Wait!" Leafpool yelped, scurrying after her sister.

Leafpool and Squirrelflight walked off, chattering mindlessly about random things. Somehow, yet again, the topic became Brambleclaw.

"I guess I just really want to see him again," Squirrelflight sighed.

Leafpool looked at her sister with wide, sorrowful eyes. "Whatever happens, I don't want you to feel like I'm keeping you from him."

"Thanks, Leafpool." Squirrelflight averted her gaze.

***

Time seemed to move slow as a slug, but three sunrises finally

passed.

It was on this chilly but sunshiny morning that Squirrelflight pulled Leafpool aside, padding out of camp with her.

Leafpool looked at her sister, trying to tell what she was thinking. Squirrelflight's tail-tip was twitching nervously. Her ears were swiveling to hear everything around her.

"Are you okay?" Leafpool asked.

"What? Yeah. I'm fine!" Squirrelflight rushed.

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah. I'm fine, trust me."

"Okay," Leafpool meowed.

Internally, though, Leafpool knew that something was on her sister's mind.

Squirrelflight stopped abruptly, spinning around to face her sister.

"Listen," Squirrelflight meowed, "I'm really sorry if I upset you, but I can't force my heart to stay here."

Leafpool knew what was coming next.

"I have to follow my heart, like you followed yours."

As Leafpool listened, she could feel her heart shattering into a million pieces.

Squirrelflight took a deep breath, her head hanging with shame. "I have to go back to ThunderClan."

"I guess I can't force you to stay," Leafpool decided. "And I would never do that to you anyways."

"I'm leaving today. You said I am healed, and after Brambleclaw visited, I just didn't feel at home with you. ThunderClan is my home, where I can live with Brambleclaw."

Leafpool had resigned to the fact that her sister was leaving for good. "At least let me walk you to the border."

The pair walked to the border in silence, and although both had so many things that they wanted to say to each other, they just couldn't find the courage to say them.

At the border, Squirrelflight turned to her sister for what could be their final goodbye. "I promise, I will visit your kits as soon as I can. Come visit my future kits someday as well. Good luck with your kits."

Leafpool tried to raise her tail and act happy, but she couldn't do it. "I'll miss you so much!" Leafpool exclaimed, trying to hold back the river of sadness that threatened to drown her.

"Goodbye, sister," Squirrelflight meowed.

"Goodbye."

Squirrelflight crossed into ThunderClan territory, and soon Leafpool lost sight of her sister's ginger pelt among the tall, dark trees.

Leafpool trudged back to her nest, disappointed and alone. Crowfeather curled up beside her, trying his best to give his mate love and joy, but nothing could fill the hole in her heart.

A/N: Thanks to everyone who voted, but I've given up on tagging. IT DOESN'T WORK RIGHT!!! UGH!!!!! If you voted, you know who you are. Feel free to say "you're welcome" in the comments or something, and it wouldn't hurt if you voted again.... Thx!

This chapter is a bit late. I apologize for the delay, but the New York State Testing, stuff with the joint account, and a new story idea have kind of slowed me down.

I won't spoil it for whether or not Squirrelflight will be back. The kits will arrive very soon, so Leafpool will have something to occupy her time so she doesn't get to depressed.

Should Leafpool be depressed? Plz vote in the comments. This

will affect my decisions for the sequel, and what to do with it. First ever Warriors suicide? Some Dark Forest stuff? Mapleshade? (I love Mapleshade, and she might make an appearance in the second book...)

I am so close to the finish, and I am very excited to write the sequel. No spoilers yet. ;) I am very excited to write the sequel, and this book will probably be done before the end of June... no guarantees. I still have end of the year tests to worry about, and my birthday. It's June 8th. :)

Thx to all of my readers! 1,481 reads is a LOT!! I love you all!

Well, that was a word blob. Are you curious about the sequel yet?

Chapter 18

The final spasm rippled through Leafpool's belly, and a small gray tom slid onto the moss.

Leafpool purred tiredly. "Two toms and a she-kit."

"What will we name them?" Crowfeather wondered.

Leafpool pulled her firstborn, a small black she-kit, closer to her. "This one is Hollykit. Squirrelflight always liked that name."

Leafpool's biggest kit, with broad shoulders and golden tabby fur, crawled towards his mother and latched onto her belly.

"Can we name him Lionkit? He's the strongest," Crowfeather decided.

Leafpool agreed. "And the last one will be Jaykit."

"They're perfect. I love you, Leafpool."

Crowfeather curled up beside his mate, their kits surrounded by warmth and a loving family.

Snow fell around them, but their love and body heat kept them warm even through the chill of the night.

***

The kits were a moon old, and Hollykit and Lionkit were chasing each other around the clearing, their paws crushing the light layer of snow beneath them. Jaykit, however, was bored and uninterested in their game. Instead, he was pawing at a stick on the ground.

"Jaykit?" Leafpool called.

The little kit's ears perked up, and he lifted his head. Jaykit's milky white eyes found Leafpool.

"Would you be a helpful kit and find me a big leaf? The biggest one that you can find, please," Leafpool asked.

"Of course, mama," Jaykit squeaked.

Jaykit bounced off, under the willow tree. As soon as he felt a leaf at his paws, he stretched them out and felt around the outside. When he found a leaf that seemed larger than the others, he picked it up and padded over to Leafpool.

Leafpool set down the leaf in front of her. "Thank you, little one," she meowed, giving her kit an affectionate lick on the head.

"Hey! Stop it, mama!" Jaykit exclaimed.

Leafpool glanced around the clearing. She could see a huge oak leaf that had blown in the wind, far across the clearing, but it was clear that Jaykit had no idea of its existence.

I was right! My poor baby is blind.

A/N: Thanks for 1.5k reads and 64 votes! I love the support.

I posted a message on my Conversations thing, but for those of you who don't follow me:

"Leafpool's Choice is going to have 23 chapters total. It will also have 3-4 bonus chapters and a SEQUEL!!!

I am not announcing much about the sequel, but I have it somewhat planned out. I will be giving hints about it in my author's notes and in the comments. Don't be afraid to ask about it, because I might answer! There are only 5 more chapters to write (after I post chapter 18), which is kind of sad, because finishing a book is like the characters are leaving my heart. Even though I'm writing a sequel about one of Leafpool's kits (<- If that wasn't a good enough hint, then I can't help you), it's still pretty sad.

Thanks to all of my loyal readers and voters! I love you all!

Here's your hint: Leafpool will have 2 litters of kits.

Chapter 19

Nearly six moons had passed since Leafpool's kits were born. Leafpool was comfortably settled in the center of the camp, letting the sun's golden rays warm her pelt.

Leafpool's kits were goofing off near the camp entrance, so Leafpool turned her attention to her mate.

Crowfeather had entered the camp with his jaws full of prey, as was expected in the perfect Greenleaf weather.

Crowfeather purred and touched noses with his mate, content. Leafpool turned her back to the kits, trusting that Hollykit's good judgement would steer them away from trouble.

Sure, Hollykit may have had too much respect for the warrior code, but Leafpool had just made a horrible mistake.

***

"This is a bad idea!" Hollykit exclaimed.

"Pfft. We'll be fiiiine," Lionkit mewed.

"I'm with him," Jaykit mumbled.

"Okay, fine, but as soon as we see something interesting, we turn around and come home," Hollykit decided.

"You're no fun!" Lionkit pouted.

***

"You know, it's been really wonderful raising these kits. Hollykit keeps them in line, Lionkit has the best games, and Jaykit keeps the peace. I don't think we've ever once ran into a major problem," Leafpool purred.

"It's too bad that we're making them into apprentices soon," Crowfeather meowed.

"I know. It's such a huge step for them... WAIT, WHAT?! Apprentices? We never talked about this before!"

"You don't want to train them?" Crowfeather asked, confused.

"Of course I want to train them." Leafpool glanced back towards her kits. Wait, where were her kits?

"Crowfeather!" she yowled. "The kits are gone!"

***

"This was a wonderful idea," Jaykit spoke up in his usual quiet mew.

The sun warmed the three kits' backs as they padded through the tall, soft grass.

"We don't know what dangers are out here, so we should head towards something familiar," Hollykit reasoned.

"We've all heard the story of Squirrelflight and the badger." Jaykit shuddered.

"Crowfeather says we'll be apprentices soon!" Lionkit began to make small talk.

"Shut up and sniff the air," Hollykit hissed.

The other kits raised their noses up to sniff.

"It smells like Leafpool, but more of her," Lionkit noted.

"You're right," Jaykit meowed. "If we're looking for a safe direction, then that's it."

Hollykit set off towards the scent, beckoning with her tail for the others to follow. Lionkit and Jaykit scrambled to keep up.

Hollykit walked with confidence and grace, her head held high and

her tail in the air. She didn't like Lionkit's idea of fun, but it had become her job to keep her brothers from becoming idiots. (Not that it made much difference. In her mind they were both considered idiots already.)

Lionkit bounced along cheerfully, chattering mindlessly to whichever others were willing to listen. The other kits ignored his rambling for the most part, but they both shared his excitement about becoming apprentices.

Jaykit padded forward carefully and warily, using Lionkit's constant stream of chatter as a guide. His ears swiveled back and forth quickly, trying to pick up every little bit of sound that they could. He stumbled over tree branches many times, but he used this information to his advantage. Tree branches meant forests.

"Stop!" Hollykit hissed. "I hear voices."

The kits froze, and even Lionkit stopped talking. Hollykit darted into a clump of thickly woven brambles, and the others followed her lead, huddled together silently.

Three cats came into view, two she-cats and a tom. A ginger she-cat with mischievous green eyes and a single white paw was in the lead. She was having a friendly conversation with a white she-cat with orange spots. The kits could only see part of her face, with a beautiful blue eye, but she turned, revealing horrible scars and gashes down the side of her face. Worst of all, there was an empty socket where her eye should've been. The third cat, a golden-brown tabby tom, was busy marking the border, and seemed uninterested in the she-cats' conversation.

"That's Squirrelflight!" Jaykit whispered.

"Shh!" Hollykit hissed.

For once, Lionkit stayed quiet.

Squirrelflight's eyes perked up, and she spun around, looking directly at the kits' hiding place. "Did you hear that?" she asked.

"Hear what?" The one-eyed she-cat glanced at her friend curiously.

"Voices," Squirrelflight explained. "What about you, Brackenfur, did you hear them?"

"Nope," the tom replied.

Squirrelflight padded towards the bushes. "Aha! There are kits in here!"

Squirrelflight stuck her head into the brambles and dragged Jaykit out by the scruff of his neck.

"Hey! Put me down!" he squeaked.

Hollykit and Lionkit emerged from the bushes a moment later.

"We're sorry. We'll go back home now. Leafpool will be worried sick!" Hollykit hung her head in shame.

"Leafpool?" Squirrelflight asked.

"She's our mom," Lionkit piped up.

"Come on, let's go back," Hollykit meowed, heading towards the border.

"Oh no you don't." Brackenfur blocked the kits' path with his tail. "You three are coming with us."

A/N: Hi again everyone. Thx to everyone who voted or added my story to their reading lists. I got at least 5 different voters and was added to 3 new reading lists last night alone, so I'm too lazy to list everyone. Thanks for the support.

Sorry about the cliffhanger. You must feel like I'm torturing you, but the next update will be posted soon.

Hint: The main character hasn't been born yet at this point.

Can I just rant for a second? I hate, hate HATE Jayfeather. So many people are saying "Jaybae," and "I love Jayfeather," but he's the worst! No offense, but he treats everyone like fox dung, and he's supposed to help people. There's "grumpy" and

then there's "Jayfeather". He was just horrible to other people, and he took what he had for granted. Jayfeather was blind, but he was lucky that he had a purpose in life and a wonderful family that loved him. Briarlight, on the other hand, couldn't do anything, and was so badly injured, but she was always so happy. Jayfeather was none of that, even though his whole purpose was to help others!

Do you like Jayfeather? Did I change your perspective on Jayfeather a bit?

Thanks for reading. If anyone read my whole rant, then you deserve a gold star. <3

Bye!

~Hollyfeather

A/N part two: my feelings have since changed, I still do find him annoying but he has his funny moments too, your opinions on him are all valid as well. Overall though I just felt that the power of three characters weren't as well-written and their personalities tended to fall flat, and for me as a reader it was unfortunate that the one cat with personality had a personality I disliked. As a character, he was well-written, but as a cat he always just made me annoyed. Like he has his good moments but if I read too much of him I just get sick of it. I will say that most of this stems from the weirdos on the internet who would call him "jaybae" and be creepy, he's not badly written overall and if you like him, cool! That's pog too!

Chapter 20

I have writer's block, but I'm going to struggle to write this anyway.

Leafpool's paws thumped on the ground as she ran through the moors. Crowfeather was ahead, and Leafpool could see his black pelt in the distance. The scent of her kits was in the air, and she hurried to follow it.

The scent lead into the ThunderClan forest. Crowfeather was waiting for her at the border, looking back at his mate. The pair padded into ThunderClan territory slowly, alert for patrols or animals.

The scent of the kits merged with three other cats, who Leafpool identified as Brightheart, Squirrelflight, and Brackenfur.

The cats continued to the ThunderClan camp.

"Leafpool?" Crowfeather asked.

Leafpool took a deep breath, thinking carefully about what's to come. "Let's go."

Crowfeather pressed up against his mate, sharing his strength and support, and they walked into the ThunderClan camp together.

***

"Wow! That's so cool!" Lionkit gazed up at Honeypaw adoringly.

"When I learned the Warrior Code, there were 14 rules. Leafpool and Crowfeather never taught me to hate kittypets," Hollykit meowed.

"We don't hate them, we just reject their lifestyle. No clan cat would ever dream of leaving the clans to become a kittypet," Honeypaw meowed.

Jaykit stayed silent, pondering for a moment. "So, do you have any other unique traditions?"

"There's a gathering every full moon, and all of the clan cats meet on an island in the middle of the lake. We discuss news and share tongues. It's always such fun!" Poppypaw's eyes lit up.

Lionkit's eyes widened. "Wow, that's so cool! I bet I would make lots of friends there!"

"I'm sure," Berrypaw said dryly.

"Be polite," Hazelpaw scolded. "They're new here."

"Lionkit, Jaykit," Hollykit addressed her siblings, "We need to talk."

The three kits padded off into a secluded corner of camp.

"What is it?" Jaykit meowed, pawing at the ground.

"We shouldn't be here. We need to get back to our-" Hollykit turned around, her mouth dropping open. "parents...."

***

Leafpool and Crowfeather bounded towards their kits, worried expressions on their faces.

"Why would you wonder off like that? We were so worried about you!" Leafpool exclaimed.

"I told you they'd be mad," Hollykit mewed.

Jaykit crouched away from his parents, tail between his legs. Lionkit's eyes narrowed, his tail lashing.

"I'm really sorry, and the others are too." Hollykit looked up into her parents eyes.

Leafpool gave Hollykit an affectionate lick on the head. "It's okay. Everyone makes mistakes."

"Thank you, but I like it here. Can we come back someday?"

Hollykit asked.

Lionkit's ears perked up. "Can we stay here?"

Crowfeather's eyes widened. "What?"

"He said, 'Can we stay here?'" Hollykit yelled.

"Do you want to stay?" Crowfeather asked.

"Yup," Jaykit meowed.

"I'll be the strongest fighter that there ever was!" Lionkit squeaked, bouncing up and down.

"My heart, and the warrior code, carry me here," Hollykit stated.

"Leafpool?" Crowfeather turned to his mate for help.

"We need to talk about this one," Leafpool meowed.

A/N

UGHHHHHHHH!!!!!!! ThAt wAs sO LaTe!

I was sick, okay?

Welcome back to Leafpool's Choice, and thanks for all of your support.

Here's something I'm curious about: Where are you all from? My demographics say I have readers from Germany, Australia, Finland, Norway, and the U.S., and it's said numerous places before as well. (France, for example.)

Hint: This one's up to you! I had an idea for possibly a gender fluid cat, but I don't know if I should include him/her.

Bye for now! <3

Chapter 21

"Leafpool, we can't just let these kits go," Crowfeather meowed.

Leafpool glanced around at the camp that she had once called home, pondering. The camp was nearly empty. The only cats there were Whitewing, Birchfall, Spiderleg, some apprentices, and, of course, the queens and elders. The camp seemed empty and sad.

It was just then that a patrol came sauntering into camp, laden with fresh-kill. Sandstorm was in the lead, followed by Cloudtail and Cinderpaw.

Sandstorm set down her prey, turning to Spiderleg. "Did you take my apprentice battle training?"

"Of course," Spiderleg nodded. "Every apprentice did well."

Cinderpaw bounded up to the other apprentices. "I caught a massive crow!" She exclaimed. Then, she saw the kits. "Who are they?" She asked.

The other apprentices began to explain, while Sandstorm switched focus. "Leafpool?" She looked at her daughter in disbelief. "Leafpool, it's you!"

Leafpool spun around. "Mom!"

"I've missed you so much!" she exclaimed, licking her daughter on the head.

Leafpool purred, not even minding that her mother was treating her a bit like a kit.

Sandstorm pulled away. "Where have you been? First you, then Squirrelflight! At least *she* came back to the clan."

Taking a step back, Leafpool meowed, "I was following my heart, like StarClan told me."

"StarClan told you to walk away from everything that you knew and loved? StarClan told you to break our hearts? To leave in the dead of night without warning? That's what *StarClan* said?"

Crowfeather stepped between the quarreling she-cats. "Leafpool, we have matters to discuss. Don't let your mother's words sting. She's just shocked, that's all."

Leafpool took a deep breath, dipped her head to her mother, and then followed Crowfeather away, towards the side of the hollow.

Sorry, mom.

"Listen, Leafpool. We can't let these kits leave us. They spent their whole lives with us, and it will be hard for them to survive in such a different environment."

"I agree, it will take some getting used to, especially for Hollykit. And I know how hard it was for you when Feathertail died. However, StarClan told me to follow my heart, and go with you. Hollykit says that her heart tells her to live in ThunderClan. The kits have family here. Squirrelflight and Brambleclaw, and my parents. They will be loved and taken care of."

Crowfeather glanced at his mate reluctantly, taking a moment to think. "Alright, but only if we can visit them at any time."

"Agreed," Leafpool meowed.

The pair touched noses and padded back towards their kits. "You can stay," Leafpool announced. She licked each kit on the top of the head.

"We'll be back in a few sunrises for your apprentice ceremony," Crowfeather meowed, touching noses with every kit.

"This will be so much fun!" Honeypaw exclaimed. She already seemed like she had made friends with Hollykit.

"Thanks," Hollykit purred.

Lionkit, for once, was speechless, bouncing up and down on his

paws.

Jaykit touched noses with his mother. "I'll miss you."

"Goodbye, kits," Leafpool breathed. "I love you so much."

Cinderpelt trotted into camp, jaws filled with herbs. Her mouth dropped open when she saw Leafpool, and the herbs fell to the ground. "Leafpool?"

Leafpool purred, greeting her mentor happily. "It's been so long!"

"I've missed you! Badgers attacked, and I almost died, but Brightheart saved me. Sootfur actually did die. We've made many new apprentices and warriors. You've missed so much!" Cinderpelt meowed.

Brackenfur, Squirrelflight, and Brightheart padded into camp, followed by Firestar and Brambleclaw. Leafpool was surrounded by cats and commotion that she could barely comprehend. It resulted in Firestar inviting Leafpool and Crowfeather to stay and share the plentiful Greenleaf prey with them.

Leafpool spent the afternoon with her Clanmates, and her heart ached when the time came for goodbyes. Squirrelflight walked with Leafpool and Crowfeather to the border, and stood watching until she could no longer see her sister's brown pelt.

"You have great Clanmates. They're all so kind and supportive," Crowfeather meowed, brushing against his mate.

"Are you going to bring up the Clan thing again?" Leafpool asked. Since the first time Crowfeather had mentioned it, the pair had had many long discussions about making a Clan. Leafpool had the slightest idea of a compromise in her head, but didn't want to mention it yet.

"We can talk about this after our kits become apprentices," Crowfeather meowed.

Leafpool purred, padding along beside her mate. She just enjoyed their closeness, and she just felt happy. *This is why I left. It's moments*

like these when I know that I made the right choice.

A/N

I got the new warriors book! It could be a great way to kill off all of ThunderClan's extras. ThunderClan's way too big, and half of them haven't even said anything ever. Most of them probably have no idea who Hollytuft is, and couldn't care less about what she says.

Also, here's what would've happened if Leafpool and Crowfeather didn't let their kits leave: They would've snuck off to join ThunderClan, and their parents would be mad, but they would have let the kits stay, because clearly they really wanted to.

Thanks for reading! The next chapter will be the last, and then there will be some bonuses. (I just got 2,000 reads, so that's good!)

Chapter 22

"Leafpool! Crowfeather!" A ginger cat burst through the camp entrance.

"Squirrelflight!" Leafpool touched noses with her sister. "Apprentice ceremony?" She asked.

"Yep. It's today!" Squirrelflight tried to catch her breath. "I ran all the way here." Squirrelflight continued, "It's been a lot of fun watching them in the nursery, even if it was only three sunrises. They're wonderful cats."

"I would've loved to apprentice Jaykit myself," Leafpool commented.

"Parents never mentor kits," Squirrelflight replied. "And besides, Jaykit already talked to Firestar about what he wants to do."

"What does he want to do?" Crowfeather asked.

"I don't know. Nobody does." Squirrelflight shrugged.

The green and brown shades of forest were evident on the horizon, and the three picked up the pace. ThunderClan scent was in the air.

"I can't wait to see them again," Leafpool purred.

A border patrol of Sandstorm, Cinderpaw, and Brambleclaw was at the border.

Squirrelflight fell into step beside her mate.

"We'll make it just in time, I think," Sandstorm meowed.

Cinderpaw sniffed the air. "I think I smell fox."

"How old is it, and where is it?" Sandstorm asked.

"It's stale, and it's blowing across the border. We have nothing to worry about."

"Good," Sandstorm praised the little gray cat. Cinderpaw glowed with pride.

The scent of ThunderClan was stronger, and the camp's bramble walls were up ahead.

"It's almost time for the ceremony!" Squirrelflight exclaimed.

Leafpool and Crowfeather walked into the ThunderClan camp, and were greeted by cheerful faces.

Then, a golden tabby tom barreled through the crowd. "Leafpool! Crowfeather! I can't believe that I'm seeing you again! What do you think our apprentice names will be?"

Hollykit gave her brother a shove. "Lionpaw, idiot!"

Crowfeather's whiskers twitched with amusement.

"It's wonderful to see you again," Leafpool purred.

"I'm going to be a Medicine Cat!" Jaykit mewed.

Leafpool licked her son on the head. "I'm so proud of you!"

"He's following in your footsteps," a familiar voice purred.

Leafpool spun around. "Firestar!"

Her father stood behind her, his ginger fur gleaming. His eyes shone with pride for the kits. "Hello, Leafpool." He brushed his muzzle against hers. "It's time for the ceremony," he meowed, bounding away to the Highrock.

"All cats old enough to catch their own prey, gather beneath the Highrock for a clan meeting," the familiar call rang throughout camp.

Leafpool wrapped her tail around her kits, guiding them to the base

of the rock. Jaykit and Hollykit's fur shone, licked clean by Squirrelflight. Lionkit, however....

"Lionkit, get back here! You looked like a badger dragged you through brambles by your tail!"

Leafpool tried to hide her amusement as Squirrelflight jumped on top of the golden kit and tried to lick him clean. He wiggled and squirmed, making his pelt even more dirty. "Lionkit!" she exclaimed.

Lionkit struggled free, scurrying to stand with his siblings.

"Today is the day that three kits become apprentices. Hollykit, until the day that you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Hollypaw. Brackenfur, you trained Whitewing very well, and I trust that you will do the same for Hollypaw."

Hollypaw stood up, her eyes shining with joy, and padded to her mentor, touching noses with him.

"Lionkit," Firestar meowed, wincing at the sight of his messy, dirt covered pelt, "until the day you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Lionpaw. Brightheart, you have never had an apprentice, but you have shown courage and persistence despite your struggles. I know you will train this apprentice well."

Brightheart looked so proud to finally have an apprentice, and with her head held high, she padded towards Lionpaw.

"Finally, Jaykit." Firestar turned his attention to the last kit of the litter. "Young Jaykit has chosen a very special path, to become the next Medicine Cat of ThunderClan. Cinderpelt, you trained Leafpool well, and I'm sure Jaykit will become an equally skilled Medicine Cat. Until the day you become a full Medicine Cat of ThunderClan, you will be known as Jaypaw."

Jaypaw looked a bit flustered and embarrassed as Cinderpelt hobbled towards him. "Come with me," she meowed. "You have a lot to learn."

"What do we do first?" Jaypaw asked.

"I'll take you into the forest, and show you the best places for herbs. There should be plenty, in such good weather." Cinderpelt limped to Leafpool. "Do you want to come with us?"

Leafpool looked over at her mate. Crowfeather had been invited to join Hollypaw, Lionpaw, Brackenfur, and Brightheart as they toured the territory with their apprentices. "Sure, I can come with you," she agreed.

The three cats padded (or limped) out of camp.

"Jaypaw, this is the best place to find marigold. We're right by the WindClan border stream, since this plant grows well near water. Here, you can smell the plant," Cinderpelt meowed, placing the plant in front of Jaypaw.

Jaypaw felt the plant with his whiskers, and took a big sniff. "What's it for?" He asked.

"Usually to stop infection and bleeding, but we also give it to the elders for stiff joints. It's chewed into a poultice and placed on the wound," Leafpool answered.

Cinderpelt gave her former apprentice a nod. "Right."

Cinderpelt pointed out herbs as they passed them, collecting stalks in her jaws and occasionally setting them down to talk about a herb or it's purpose. Leafpool noted that she was doing a good job of describing things to Jaypaw without using sight. Instead, she would talk to him about scents or sounds. "This is yarrow," Cinderpelt meowed. "If a cat eats something poisonous, we give this to them and it makes them throw up."

"Like deathberries?" Jaypaw asked.

"Exactly. You can taste it if you want," Cinderpelt offered.

Jaypaw nipped a little bit of the leaf off and chewed. "Yuck!" He exclaimed, spitting the leaf onto the ground.

Leafpool purred with laughter. "Cinderpelt did the same thing to me when I was an apprentice," she recalled.

Finally, every cat's jaws were filled with herbs, so they padded back to camp. "I can smell the other cats," Jaypaw meowed.

"That's right," Cinderpelt purred. "The camp is right in front of us." Cinderpelt slipped through the entrance, followed by the others.

Suddenly, Leafpool was knocked over and rolled onto her back. She tried to get a view of her attacker, but he moved too fast. She pushed up with her hind legs, kicking the cat away. Leafpool rolled onto her feet and shook the dirt out of her fur. A black shape was lying motionless on the ground a little ways away.

"Crowfeather?" She walked up to him. "Crowfeather, stop. You aren't fooling anyone."

The black shape didn't move.

"Oh no! Crowfeather, I'm sorry...." Leafpool trailed off, nudging Crowfeather with her nose.

Suddenly,Crowfeather surged upward and knocked her away.

"That's not funny, Crowfeather!" Leafpool exclaimed, but she wasn't very convincing.

Crowfeather purred his laughter.

"Squirrelflight put you up to this, didn't she? She played the same trick on me when we were kits!" Leafpool purred.

"I learned so much today," Hollypaw was telling her siblings. "Brackenfur tested me on the Warrior Code, and he said I recited it perfectly!"

"ShadowClan smells so weird," Lionpaw said.

"I learned about marigold, poppy seeds, catmint, comfrey, and so many other herbs. I even got to try some yarrow!" Jaypaw told his brother and sister.

"What does yarrow taste like?" Hollypaw asked.

"Disgusting! It makes you throw up," Jaypaw meowed, "so if you eat deathberries, I can save you."

Sorreltail, who was lying nearby, meowed, "Darkstripe fed me deathberries as a kit, and Cinderpelt saved me with yarrow."

I haven't talked to Sorreltail in ages, but she was my best friend.
Leafpool padded to Sorreltail and sat down. "Sorreltail, I heard you had kits since I was gone. They're apprentices now, right?" Leafpool asked.

"Yes," Sorreltail meowed. "Honeypaw, Cinderpaw, and Poppypaw. They're wonderful."

The she-cats sat in silence for a moment, but it was broken by Sorreltail. "I haven't seen you in so long," she meowed.

"I'm so sorry! I hid all of this from you, and I left without warning! I betrayed you!" Leafpool rested her head on the ground, silently waiting for a response.

Sorreltail was silent, but then she whispered, "I forgive you."

The two friends sat in silence for a few moments, just watching. Crowfeather was across the camp, talking with Brambleclaw.

However, Leafpool soon noticed that they weren't just talking, they were fighting. Both toms were standing defiantly, ears back and tails lashing.

Crowfeather spat something, then stalked over to Leafpool. "We're leaving," he growled.

Leafpool touched noses with Sorreltail, and her kits bounded over to say goodbye. Sandstorm gave Leafpool a lick on the ear, and Squirrelflight meowed a friendly goodbye.

As Leafpool padded away, she heard one of her kits, probably Hollypaw, yowl, "We'll miss you!"

A/N:

The book's over, but don't archive it just yet!

There are still a few bonus chapters to come! (Probably four.)

Thank you to everyone who has stayed with Leafpool and Crowfeather for this whole incredible adventure!

Thanks to all!

~Hollyfeather

Bonus 1

Berry flopped on the ground, her siblings talking nearby. Her belly rumbled loudly, but she ignored it. Her and her siblings were trying their best to hunt, but Pebble was too loud and Mint was too cautious.

"We need to go hunting," Mint mewed, her quiet voice barely a whisper.

Pebble and Berry swiftly agreed.

Berry slunk through the forest, her belly down, her tail still, just like mother had taught her. She opened her mouth and tasted the air.

"I smell mouse," Mint hissed. She slipped away in pursuit of her prey.

What mouse? Berry wondered. *I don't smell a thing.*

Berry continued through the forest, ears pricked. Finally, she heard a rustling noise to her left, and she prowled towards it.

It was a bird, absorbed in its task of pulling a worm out of the ground. The bird sat up straight, revealing its red-feathered chest. The worm clamped in its beak, it stretched its wings, preparing for flight.

Berry leaped, flying straight at the bird. The bird lifted off, soaring towards the nearest tree. Berry hit the ground with a thump, before scrambling to jump at the bird again.

She stretched out her paws in front of her. It was like she could almost taste the bird in her mouth. Berry could feel her sharp claws sink into the bird's feathered wings, and blood dripped onto the ground below.

Twisting in the air, Berry landed on her paws, swiftly biting the

bird's neck. It let out a loud squawk, then lay on the ground, motionless.

Berry picked up her limp, bloodstained bird and carried it back to her den proudly, leaving a trail of blood and feathers behind her.

Berry's mouth watered, but she knew she had to wait for her siblings to return.

Pebble padded happily into the den, his thick gray fur splattered with mud.

"What happened to you?" Berry asked.

Pebble tried to shake the mud out of his fur. "I slipped in the mud getting this." He gestured to the muddied vole at his feet proudly.

"Good job," Berry meowed.

Mint padded into the den just seconds later, dropping two mice beside her brother's vole. She was silent as she grabbed a mouse and bit into it, enjoying the taste.

Then, she stood up, drawing one soft, gray paw over her ear.

Mint looked a bit nervous, her tail low, but she still began to speak. "We need to find our mother. ever since she went to drive the fox away, we haven't seen her at all."

"So, what do you propose we do?" Berry looked at her sister curiously.

"We can't stay here," Mint began, "for all we know, the fox is still nearby. One of us goes to find a suitable home for us, and the other two go to find our mother."

"Pebble can't go alone. He needs someone to keep him company," Berry pondered.

"I can go with him, if that's okay with you," Mint decided.

"That's fine," Berry agreed.

A cold breeze ruffled through the cats' fur, and Berry looked up at the sky. It was almost dark, and Berry could just barely see the first few stars winking into existence. She shivered, fluffing up her white, tan-and-red spotted fur. Mint crouched down, trying to keep warm. Pebble was bouncing up and down on his paws.

"Maybe we sleep first," Mint meowed.

"Maybe," Berry purred.

Berry slipped into the patch of ferns where they slept, curling up on the soft moss hidden inside the fern ring.

Berry rolled on her back, staring at the cloudless sky between the fern fronds, until eventually, she fell into a restless sleep.

A/N:

You may be wondering, "Who are these cats? Are they important?" This chapter may seem a bit confusing.

Good.

That's what I was going for.

Also, someone asked about Hollyleaf having powers. She is one of my favorite characters (her, Mapleshade, and Ivypool), and she deserves it. Yes, in the sequel she probably will have powers. I'm pondering between shapeshifting, being able to see the truth (like if someone tells a lie she knows what really happened), mind reading, or seeing the Codes that cats broke (if an apprentice eats a piece of prey on patrol instead of bringing it back to camp, if a cat watched kits drown without intervening, etc.). Vote for your favorite. Death and flight, the powers suggested in the comment, are both really cool. Death, however, could be too powerful and screw up the plot. I like flight though, so vote for that if you want as well. Just answer in the comments if you want.

Thanks for reading!

Bonus 2

If you don't like blood or gore, you can skip the ending. As long as you read the last sentence, you can still understand it. No author's note today. Thanks for reading!

Mint opened her mouth, inhaling the scents around her. The scents of the forest, plants, and animals surrounded her. She soon picked up her mother's scent, following it with her nose to the ground.

It was just past dawn, and the sky was smeared with oranges and pinks. Sunlight pierced through the gaps in the leaves, dappling the soft forest floor. Mint pricked her ears, listening to the rustling of small creatures, the happy chirping of birds, and the mindless babble of her brother in the background.

"Oh, shut up," Mint hissed. "Mother should've named you Babbling Creek."

"Well, she should've named you Shadow Paws!"

"I actually like that name." Mint purred with laughter.

Pebble gave his smaller sister a shove, and she stumbled towards a tree. Mint picked herself up and cuffed Pebble over the ear. "Focus. We have better things to do than crash into trees." Mint shook the bark and leaf mulch from her fur.

~~Babbling Creek~~ ... I mean Pebble... walked on in silence, sulking.

"Sniff the air. The fox scent gets stronger up ahead," Mint pointed out.

Pebble raised his nose and sniffed the air. "You're right," he meowed.

Mint broke into a run, dashing into a sandy clearing. Pebble followed.

Mint sniffed the air, padding around the clearing. *This must've been the fox's den,* Mint noted. The scent of fox was stale, though.

Mint padded over to what appeared to be the body of the fox, lying beside a tree. A dried trail of blood made it look as if the fox had been dragged to the side of the clearing. The fox's face was frozen in an expression of fear and anger, pearly teeth bared. Its amber eyes were forever clouded. It was covered in clumpy red fur, frozen in place by dried blood, its pelt laced with horrible scratch and bite wounds. It smelled strongly of cat and fox, but even more than that, fear. Its tail, which appeared to have once been large and bushy, was clumped oddly.

"Look," Mint meowed. "There are scratches on the tree. The fox tried to climb it, and it got up a few cat-lengths, too!"

"Foxes can't climb," Pebble pointed out.

"This looks like a small fox," Mint mewed. "Maybe it's possible."

"Mom killed a fox, mom killed a fox!" Pebble chanted.

But then why didn't she come back to us? Mint sniffed the blood-covered body, pressing her nose close to the hardened red fur. It smelled like fear, and a lot like fox, but underneath that, something familiar.

Carefully, Mint lapped at the fur on the fox's cheek, and the blood started to disappear. Mint tasted its salty tang in her mouth, trying hard not to gag.

Mint backed away from the fox, revealing that the fur on the fox's face was... white?

Mint froze in horror, and then her heart sank to her paws. *No, no, no! Please, no!*

She looked up to her brother with wide, sad eyes, breaking into her brother's cheerful chant with her quiet, solemn mew.

"Pebble, I don't think this is a fox."

Bonus 3

"What do you mean?" Pebble looked at Mint in disbelief. "Mom killed a fox...." Pebble trailed off, seeing the odd splotch of white fur hidden under the dried blood. He connected the dots in his head, sudden understanding washing over him.

"Let's give her a proper burial. That's what she would've wanted," Mint whispered, her voice feeling strained and thin.

Mint continued to lick her mother's fur clean, getting every bit of blood off of her fur. Mint looked down at her face and gently closed her eyes.

Her mother's long, white fur and tan and red patches were exposed, and she looked so astonishingly similar to Berry. *I hope Berry's okay!*

So a hole was dug, the body placed, and then the hole was filled again. The hole was ringed with little blue flowers, and a smooth white stone marked the site.

Mint bowed her head, whispering goodbye, and Pebble did the same.

***

Pebble opened his eyes the next morning to find bright sunlight glaring down in his eyes. The sun hovered lazily, high above the kits' heads.

Mint was awake, just a few cat-lengths away, grooming bits of blood and dirt out of her fur.

"Good, you're awake. We'd better keep going then," Mint stated, padding away.

Before long, Mint's long plume of a tail disappeared behind a clump of ferns.

"Hey, wait!" Pebble scrambled after his sister clumsily.

Scurrying after his sister, Pebble's paws slipped on a patch of slick, dew-covered grass, sending him sprawling to the ground with a thud.

"Need any help?" a she-cat's voice asked.

"Huh?" Pebble twisted to look at the source of the voice.

A young white she-cat with black spots and a piercing green gaze stood before him.

Pebble felt himself being roughly dragged to his paws, pulled by the scruff on the back of his neck. "Hey, put me down!" He squeaked, flailing his limbs a bit.

"Fine then." The cat dropped Pebble back down to the ground, and he landed in a crouch. A dull, aching pain flared in Pebble's leg, and he stretched it out tentatively.

"That's no way to treat a kit." A brown tabby tom, his muzzle streaked with gray and white, peered out from the trees.

"No, it's fine, really. I have to find my sister." Pebble spun around and darted into the trees, ignoring the throbbing pain in his hind leg.

"We can help you, maybe!" the tom called after him.

Pebble turned around. *Well, I never was good at tracking anyway. I might as well accept the help.*

***

Berry sniffed the air, unfamiliar scents flooding her nose. The prey on the moors was too fast to catch, but finally, after a sunrise of walking, she could smell cats.

Berry carefully traced the scent, opening her mouth to taste the air.

There were definitely multiple, two at least. The scent was

unfamiliar, like some odd mix between forest and moor.

Berry's stomach growled. *Stupid rabbits!* she thought.

Berry scampered through the green grasses. Despite the warm air, a cold wind buffeted her fur, and she shivered.

The scent was getting stronger. *Yes, just over this rise...*

***

"Pebble? Pebble, where are you?"

Mint spun around wildly, looking for her brother. She had lost him a while back, and he was nowhere to be found.

The dark, shadowy forest sure was creepy.

The shadows stretched towards her like claws, and Mint could feel the gazes of unseen animals crouched in sheltered corners.

An overwhelming sense of panic began to take over Mint, and she whipped her head around wildly.

Mint ran hard and fast from the shadowy cats of the forest, tripping over tree roots and crashing through clumps of sorrel and bracken.

Finally, Mint burst out onto the moors. *Wait, where am I?*

***

The brown tabby tom, whose name was Oak, gestured for Pebble and the she-cat to follow.

"What's your name?" Pebble asked, bouncing up to try to reach her height.

"Violet," she simply stated.

"Nice to meet you, Violet!"

The spotted cat didn't respond.

Pebble sighed. The she-cat was cold as ice.

A frigid wind whipped the air, and Pebble fluffed up his fur. The shelter of the forest was soon lost as Pebble's surroundings turned to the open moor.

Oak raised his head and sniffed the air, then broke into a run. He mumbled something that sounded like "Heather," and then his tail was disappearing over a rise.

"Hey, wait!" Pebble yelped, darting after the old tom.

Oak was crouched beneath a bush, and a pale brown tabby she-cat was lying beneath it. Her muzzle was streaked with gray, her breath raspy and inconsistent.

"Heather," Oak whispered. "I see you again, at last."

The she-cat opened her eyes, which were a startling blue, and she began to choke out words. "Oak? Are you real or is this a dream?" Her voice was so quiet that Pebble had to strain his ears to hear it.

"This is real. I'm here." Oak curled himself around the small, frail cat.

"You know this cat?" Violet asked.

"She was my mate, long ago," Oak meowed. "I have waited so long to see her again."

Just then, two cats emerged from the grasses. One had short, golden fur, and the other had long, white fur. Both shared Heather's stunning blue eyes.

"What are you doing here with our mother?" The golden she-cat meowed.

"Are these your kits?" Violet asked, a look of confusion on her face.

"No, they aren't. I had no idea that she had kits," Oak responded, surprisingly calm considering the situation.

"Let them stay," Heather rasped.

And so the trio did stay. They stayed the whole night, curled up beneath the bush. Pebble couldn't fall asleep though, so he just listened to Heather's rasping breaths as they slowly faded away into nothing.

A/N:

Thanks for 3,150 reads! <- Exact number...

I have a Discord server for anyone who is interested and has a Discord account. It's called Hollyfeather's Hideaway and the link will never expire. Just copy-paste it to join!

https://discord.gg/2zM9x2N

Bonus 4

Heather was buried the next morning.

A mopey, sleep-deprived Pebble stumbled away from the area. He felt like he couldn't stomach another death. He knew he couldn't bear to see another limp and broken body, eyes clouded, forever frozen in place.

Oak was so distraught that he couldn't seem to bear the thought of parting with Heather's limp, dead body. He just wanted one more night of joy and love between them, just one more run through the fields, just one more day with her. He would give anything to see her perfect blue eyes alight with joy, her fur shining in the starlight, and to hear her beautiful, elegant voice. But he was left with only memories.

Violet stood in front of Oak, meowing words of encouragement in hushed tones, although it did little good.

All of the other cats were having a hard time coping as well. Marigold, the golden-furred she-cat, worked tirelessly to bury her mother, trying to take her mind off of the loss that she had suffered. Dirt flew into her fur and eyes, getting stuck under her claws, but Marigold forced herself to continue, despite fatigue.

Cloud, the long-furred white tom, had disappeared into the grass to hunt and still hadn't returned.

Oak glanced over at Marigold, studying her as she worked. Everything about her reminded him of Heather, the way she moved, the way she talked, and the way she focused with such determination on the task she was given. It all seemed so familiar, yet so wrong.

"She always talked about you, you know," Marigold meowed. "She sometimes would wander off in the night, trying to find you. We would wake up, and she would be gone. She never got very far

though. I don't think she was in her right mind. She was sick at the time."

"It's called love." Cloud had appeared, back from hunting, a rabbit at his paws. "She loved you." The soft-spoken tom, with only six words, had brought Oak back to reality.

"And I-" Oak stuttered a bit, afraid to admit something that he had never even admitted to himself, "I loved her too."

***

Mint bounded into a hollow, a willow tree on one side. A scent that was so astonishingly familiar touched her nose, mingling with scents that were unique and different.

Berry?

But the scent was stale, and Mint's sister was nowhere to be found.

It was then that Mint heard voices. There were cats chattering, not too far away, and they were headed towards Mint!

Mint glanced around, spotting the willow tree, and she climbed it, sinking her claws into the soft bark and hauling herself up onto the lowest branch.

A black tom entered first, a big bird clamped firmly in his jaws. The tip of its wing dragged in the dust, leaving a little trail.

Next came a pale brown tabby she-cat, carrying a rabbit in her jaws. She set her rabbit down near the tom's bird.

And lastly was... Berry! Her white fur with its tan and red patches was so familiar, and her green eyes gleamed.

She doesn't know what happened to our mother! I have to be the one to tell her....

Carefully, slowly, Mint climbed down from the tree.

"Mint! It's so good to see you again!" Berry exclaimed.

Mint jolted in surprise, falling off of the tree trunk. Luckily, she landed below in a soft bed of moss. She scrambled to her paws, trying not to destroy some cat's nest. "Hello," she meowed.

"Mint, these are Leafpool and Crowfeather. They're helping me improve my hunting skills, and they're really nice." Berry gestured with her tail to each cat in turn.

"Nice to meet you," Mint said.

"But where's Pebble? And mother?" A look of confusion crossed Berry's face.

Mint dropped her gaze down to her paws. "Pebble and I got separated in the forest. And mother... mother's dead."

Berry's eyes widened. "Oh." She said nothing more. It seemed like she couldn't even comprehend what was happening.

***

The night was uneventful. Leafpool suggested that Mint and Berry sit vigil for their mother, as a time for them to say their goodbyes. She said that it helped her, every time a clanmate died.

Berry felt better the next morning, although Mint didn't feel too different.

"You can rest if you want. Leafpool and I can do the hunting," Crowfeather meowed.

Berry fell asleep as soon as her head touched the moss of her nest, but Mint still had to find a spot to sleep. She chose a spot between the roots of the willow, near her sister, and brushed away some dead leaves with her paw. The space was already moss-covered, but Mint added some feathers to the space. Newleaf was just barely beginning, and the night air was still unpleasantly cold.

Just as Mint began to drift off, she heard voices.

***

Pebble couldn't bear to stay by the burial site any longer than he had to. By sunhigh, he had convinced Oak and Violet to leave in search of his siblings, and Marigold and Cloud had offered to go with them, mostly since they wanted to help Oak recover from Heather's death.

It wasn't long before Pebble came across what must've been some cat's camp. It smelled strongly of cats who had been there recently, but not his siblings.

Suddenly, Pebble noticed something caught in a bush. It was a piece of fur, smelling strongly of his sister, Berry.

He padded onward, listening to the cheerful chatter of Marigold and Violet, who had already become fast friends.

Picking up a scent trail, Pebble followed it through the grass, over a ditch, and around a thorny bush, into a hollow.

There they were, two small lumps of fur curled up in between the roots of a tree, Pebble's sisters.

Berry was sound asleep, but Mint was wide awake, staring curiously at the approaching cats. Her eyes widened with recognition, and she leaped to her paws, running to greet her brother.

"Pebble! You're alive!" Mint exclaimed, brushing her muzzle against his.

Mint stopped short at the sight of the other cats. "Who are they?"

After Berry had awoken, and Leafpool and Crowfeather had returned, Pebble introduced Oak, Violet, Marigold, and Cloud, telling the story of how he met them.

Crowfeather pulled Leafpool aside, out of the camp. "We can't just let them stay," he hissed.

"Well, what are we supposed to do? We can't exactly kick them out either," Leafpool pointed out. "There are helpless kits and an elder who can barely fend for themselves, and we can help them. The other three would all make strong assets to our-" Leafpool caught

herself before saying "clan", instead saying, "group."

"They're just extra mouths to feed, and extra work. I don't want any stress or pressure. That's part of the reason I left my clan, and you know it!"

Leafpool could sense her mate's agitation, so she knew she had to be careful with her words. "All of my life, I knew I wanted to be a medicine cat. Cinderpelt walked with me every step of the way, and she taught me kindness and compassion. It is the nature of medicine cats, and all cats, to care for others. I could never turn away cats in need."

"If we were to let these cats stay, we can't call ourselves a clan, and we don't have to be a clan. All cats have to provide for the group, except for elders, kits, and queens. Also, no leader, deputy, or patrols," Crowfeather began.

"I think we still need a system of mentors and apprentices though. And maybe every cat could learn a bit of basic medicine as part of their training?" Leafpool suggested.

"Maybe it could be like a clan for travelers. Cats passing through could stop by, help us hunt, we share prey and knowledge, they stay the night, and then they leave."

"I suppose that makes sense, and if they came with injuries, we could help them."

"You know," Crowfeather began, "I'm alright with whatever we do, as long as I'm with you."

Leafpool purred. "How sweet."

Leafpool and Crowfeather padded back into the camp, fur brushing. Leafpool sat down beside Crowfeather in the camp, watching the kits play and chase each other around in circles, listening to Marigold and Violet chatting. It was a clan, but not a clan. And Leafpool was happy. She had everything she needed, family, a mate, and true joy, in her heart.

I'm done!!!!!!!

The Sequel is Published!!!

It is both a sad and a happy day for me. As soon as I publish this chapter, Leafpool's Choice is over. Reedwhisper's Visions, the sequel, is published on Wattpad now.

I want to thank everyone who commented, voted, followed me, or added this book to your reading lists. And if you read this book or had it in your library, then I thank you as well.

The cats all got warrior names when they joined Leafpool and Crowfeather's band of loners. Leafpool has a new litter of kits in the sequel, Reedkit, Heatherkit, Redkit, and Moonkit. The sequel might also visit the power of three cats. Hmm... I wonder how they're doing....

If you have any questions for me or the characters, we are happy to answer.

As a bonus, here is some art I did.

Here's Mint from Leafpool's Choice.

[image]

This is a spoof cover, not a real book.

[image]

Thanks for everyone's amazing support!

Also, I think Hollyleaf's power will be the truth thing.

~Hollyfeather

New Cover

Thanks @PotatoPotatoTomato for drawing me a new cover! I love it, and it looks so neat!

Here it is!

[image]

I did change the brightness a bit to make it a bit easier to see, but other than that it's the same.

I love that it's lineless. It looks so nice!

This is (Hopefully) My Last A/N

If you didn't already know, I have a Discord server. Everyone here shares the common interest of Warriors, and so I decided, why not be able to chat with the readers? I don't want to just ignore you all! So... here's the link! https://discord.gg/mtrqGD7 There are only a few people in it now, but that's fine. I just enjoy chatting and spending time with humans, and I'm trying to be more active.

Do these look alright? Is my art decent? Feedback please?

[image]

[image]

[image]

I want to thank you all one more time for your endless support!

Also goodnight if you are in the U.S., since I'm writing this at... 11:11, according to the clock in my room.